

"Tho' they curse, yet bless Thou."

A

DISCOURSE

ON PSALM cix. 27. 28.

—wherein the IMPRECATIONS in that, and other
Psalms, are considered, and explained:

By HENRY ARNOLD, D. D.

PREBENDARY OF WELLS:

PREACHED in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH there,
DECEMBER 18, 1768.

Hoc carmen possumus appellare Aias, sive, ut Virgilius, Diras.
GROTIUS IN PSM. 109.

Their Preaching is of Cursing and Lies: Psm. lix. 12.

But I give myself unto Prayer. Psm. cix. 3.

S A R U M:

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MDCCLXXI.



WHAT distress have thousands of serious and thinking men felt in reading this 109th Psalm, in which it is generally supposed that David uttered such horrid curses against his enemies! And yet, &c.

DR. KENNICOTT.

THE 109th Psalm, as it stands in our translation, has given great and just offence to many good Christians. But the difficulty may be removed, &c.

DR. RANDOLPH.

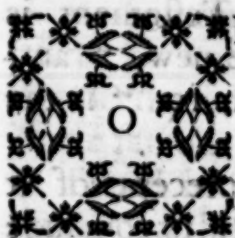


PSALM cix. 27.

Tho' they curse, yet blefs thou : and let them be confounded that rise up against me ; but let thy servant rejoice. (Translation in the Liturgy.)

28. *Let them curse, yet blefs thou : &c.*

(Version in the Bible.)



ONE of the greatest excellencies of the Christian religion (says a great writer on the behalf of it,) is the universal charity which it enjoins.—He adds, “ And we shall find that charity was likewise the doctrine of the Old Testament. For,—though the Jews in latter ages perverted some passages of their law to serve their own pride, or revenge,—yet it is evident by many instances, that never any law, but that of Christ, obliged men to more humanity towards strangers, or more charity towards enemies.—Thus,—‘ If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him,—thou shalt surely help with him,’ Exod. xxiii. 4. 5. ‘ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ we read Lev. xix. 18. ‘ and if a stranger sojourn with thee in thy land, ye shall not vex him,

but thou shalt love him as thyself;’ ver. 33. 34.—
 But, “Thou shalt hate thine enemy”—is no where
 to be found in the Old Testament. And therefore
 those words of Matt. v. 43. are to be taken as a
 false gloss of the Jewish interpreters, and which
 our Lord rejects*.” “Thou shalt love the Lord
 thy God,” says he, Matt. xxii. 37. “with all thine
 heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy
 strength, and with all thy mind: this is the first
 and great commandment. And the second is like
 unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”
 “On these two hang all the law and the prophets,”
 ver. 40. (i. e. on these they depend, and turn, as
 doors on their hinges, and so are as the cardinal vir-
 tues of the moralists.)—And, “If ye fulfil this royal
 law, according to the scriptures, ye do well,” saith
 St. James, ii. 8. So that the Old Testament is
 not, in this respect, contrary to the new, “and
 love” as saith the Apostle, Rom. xiii. 10. “is the
 fulfilling of the law.”

But do not these, and other like precepts of it
 (some may be apt to say) seem evidently to conclude
 against many other passages of a different kind
 which are to be found in it?—And—(to pass by
 the rest at present)—how in particular shall we be
 able to reconcile them to that mode of expression,
 wherein David appears so bitterly to have cursed
 his enemies, especially in Psalms 35. 69. and 109?
 —In the last of which we read as follows, “Set thou
 an ungodly man to be ruler over him; and let Satan
 stand at his right hand:” i. e. let an adversary
 stand there to accuse him; (as was the custom in
 the Jewish as in other courts) when sentence
 is given upon him,—let him be condemned;

* See Dr. Jenkins’s Reasonableness of the Christian Reli-
 gion, vol. II. page 340, 345.

and let his prayer be turned into sin : (or let his petition be rejected.) Let his days be few;—and let another take his office.—Let his children be fatherless;—and his wife a widow.—Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places.—Let the extortioner consume all that he hath;—and let the stranger spoil his labour.—Let there be no man to pity him; nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children. Let his posterity be destroyed; and in the next generation let his name be clean put out.—Let the wickedness of his father be had in remembrance in the sight of the Lord; nor the sin of his mother be done away! Let them always be before the Lord,—that he may root out the memorial of them from off the earth!” ver. 5—14.

“ And tho’ they curse,—yet bless thou; and let them be confounded that rise up against me;—but let thy servant rejoice,” ver. 27.—Inasmuch that a once famous writer (in his way) after observing that, “ David in this Psalm cix, bestows the bitterest curses on his enemies,”—goes on to say,—“ that the holier men in the Old Testament are represented,—the more cruel they seem to be,—as well as more addicted to cursing *.—”

And shall we say, with some, in answer to this charge, that, “ This hath much of the spirit of the law in it; and that there is nothing like it in the gospel † ?”---or that,---“ these imprecations were proper for those times;—when it was thought lawful to entertain hatred against private and public enemies: tho’, under the gospel, it is not lawful to wish any other to them, than you would wish

* See Christianity as old as the Creation, page 264. 265.

† See Grotius in loc.

to yourself * ?"—But will not others be apt to ask, "Is this commenting upon the scriptures like serious men? or is it not rather like playing the droll upon holy writ? By whom do they suppose it was thought lawful to hate an enemy? by the most excellent men of the Jewish church, penmen of holy Scripture, and writing by the spirit of God! A prophane suggestion, will they say.—Neither the New Testament, nor the Old, allows of any such hatred. It stands condemned both by the law and the gospel †."—And others will go on to add,—"There is nothing in the book of Psalms, or any other part of the Old Testament, contrary to this; which will appear, if we consider the peculiar reason for those expressions, which may seem to imply any thing that is so ‡;"—when some of them, which sound like curses, may be even blessings in event:—as when temporal evils may be prayed for, to preserve men from such as are eternal; or to prevent their greater progresses in sin.—Thus,—"Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathens may know themselves to be but men." Psalm ix. 20.—And consonant to this Dr. Hammond tells us, from St. Austin,—in his note upon Psalm lxxix. 22. 23.—"Let their table be made a snare to them," &c.—that this, and the following verses, are to be understood in the future sense, by way of prediction, and not of imprecation.—And indeed the Hebrew is in the future tense, (*jebi*, &c.) and is most fitly rendered so.—And so in Psalm xxxv. 4 and other like places,—the Hebrew is as capable of the future, as of the impera-

* See Le Clerc on Psalm cxxxvi. 8.

† Scripture vindicated, Part III. page 32. supposed by Dr. Waterland.

‡ Dr. Jenkin, ubi supra.

tive mood and tense *.—And, so the translation in all reason to be changed (*jebushu*,) not *let them be confounded*,—but *they shall be confounded*, or put to shame; *they shall be turned back*; *they shall be as chaff before the wind*, &c.”—“ And that David,” says he, elsewhere, “ who was a prophet, inspired by God with a knowledge of future events, should thus rather predict, or denounce God’s just judgments on obstinate finners,—and that out of designs purely charitable, viz. by denouncing to work repentance, that so repentance may frustrate and cancel the denunciation, is much more reasonable for us to resolve,—than that he should so frequently (in the spirit, when possibly without the power, of Elias) call for thunder from heaven upon his own, or on God’s enemies.”—He adds,—“ And according to this all the other Psalms, which seem to be filled with curses and imprecations on such, ought to be understood. And then there remains no farther question or difficulty how these, and the like passages, are to be accommodated to the Christian affection, and spirit,—than how the plain denunciations of the gospel are to be entertained by us;—as, “ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Thus far that able, and amiable critick; and thus they are explicated in his paraphrase and annotations on them †.—And thus, even as to those terribly sounding words, Psalm lv. 16. “ Let death come hastily upon them,---and let them go down quick into hell.”—Besides that the word here rendered hell, may signify, as in many other places, no more than the grave ‡; as particularly in Gen.

* Indeed, we may say more so,—as that language hath no optative mood, and no third person of the imperative. See Appendix, note 1.

† See him *ubi supra*. and preface to his annotations, folio, sect. 32.

‡ Psalm. xxx. 3.

xlii. 38. where Jacob exclaims, that if mischief should befall his son Benjamin by the way, "then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave;" where the same word (*sheol*) is used as here: there appears to be in this place no wish expressed in the original, but only a prophecy as afore said, that they--(the desperately and obstinately wicked,--such as will not fear God) shall go down to the grave (and so indeed to hell, for want of repentance) quickly, or alive,—in their full strength and vigour*. Thus, Psalm lxviii. 21. "God shall wound the hairy scalp of him that goeth on still in his wickedness:" and according to the last verse of the lv. Psalm, "The bloody thirsty and deceitful man shall not live out half his days †."

* See Dr. Randolph's Sermon on Jephtha's vow, page 35. in the appendix, No. 2.

† A passage of this sort—as strong, perhaps, as almost any in the Psalms,—occurs in the history of David, 1. Sam. xxvi. 29,—where, speaking to Saul after he had spared him the second time, he saith,—"If the Lord hath stirred thee up against me,—let him accept an offering: But if they be the children of men—curst *be they* before the Lord, &c."—But here too we have only to observe that the word---*be*---is not in the original,---and is inserted by our translators in a different character, to shew that it is not so.

I add that this milder interpretation of these passages in the Old Testament, may, perhaps, serve too, in some sort, to explain that seemingly severe one of the apostle in the new, 1 Tim. iv. 14. "Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his deeds:" For it is doubtful if the word here ἀποδοῦν should not be ἀποδοῦναι, will reward him so; as some copies of great antiquity and authority it seems have it. (See Grotius on Psalm cix.—tho' Dr. Mill in loc. shews they are but few.) And this doubt is yet increased, in that the phrase here used by the apostle occurring twice in the Old Testament, viz. Psalm xxviii. 4.---2 Sam. iii. 39. in the former the words are imperative, (*ten lebem*) give, or reward them; in the latter they are in the future, "The Lord shall, or will, reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness;" and how shall we be certain to which he here alludes?

And

And if there is any difference by whose mouth such words are spoken,——these are thro' that of David the king, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel, as he is emphatically stiled, 2 Sam, xxiii. 1. *—and who there says, “The spirit of the Lord spake thro' me, and his word was in my tongue,” ver. 2.——The man of God,—and after his own heart, 2 Chr. viii. 14.——1 Sam. xiii. 14.——How far how-ever they differ from the usual spirit or temper of this holy writer, and how unlikely he was of himself to have wished such, or any evil, to his enemies,---we may learn from his own mouth, Psalm vii. 3. and Psm. xxxv. 11.——In the former of these, seeming to have heard himself falsely accused of something of this sort,---he answers, with no small degree of indignation,---“O Lord, my God--if I have done any such thing!--If I have done evil to him that hath dealt friendly with me! yea I have delivered him that without any cause was mine enemy, (we read that he thus twice delivered Saul, when he had it in his power to have slain him) then let mine enemy persecute my soul, and take it;—yea let him tread my life down upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust.”—And in the latter,---“False witnesses,” says he, “did rise up against me;---they laid to my charge things that I knew not——They rewarded me evil for good, to the great discomfort of my soul. Nevertheless, when they were sick, I put on sackcloth, and humbled myself with fasting.--I behaved myself as tho' he had been my friend, or my brother: I went heavily as one that mourneth for his mother,—or, as a mourning mother,”——

* And whose very name (the word David signifying in the Hebrew the beloved, or the lovely,) might have admonished him in this case,—“*ut amēris, amabilis esto.*”

And 2 Sam. xvi. 5. we have a most remarkable instance of his behaviour of this kind, when, in his most disconsolate flight from Absalom's prevailing rebellion, he came to Bahurim,—“ Behold, from thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera:—he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at the servants of king David. And thus said Shimei when he cursed;—‘ Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial, (which signifies wicked, and good for nothing) the Lord hath rewarded upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hands of thy son Absalom; and behold thou art taken in thy mischief,—because thou art a bloody man.’ Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah, unto the king,—let me go over, I pray thee, and cut off his head: for why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? And the king said, what have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse,—because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David; and who, it may be, will look upon mine affliction, and requite me good for his cursing me this day.” Words very similar to those of my text, “ Tho’ they curse, yet blest thou.” And we may further read, 2 Sam. xix. 16—how he saved this man a second time from the hands of the same Abishai, who would have slain him when he came the first to meet the king on his return in peace, and acknowledged that he did this thing perversely, ver. 19. * And the words above,—“ It may be, that the Lord will look upon mine affliction, and requite me good for his cursing me this day,” may also serve to shew, that David thought Shimei’s cursing him to have been permitted of

* See Appendix, No. 3.

the Lord; rather as a tryal of his patience, than as what he understood to have been uttered by him in a spirit of prophecy; as some have imagined*.

The general tenor of the Psalms of David, of his penitential ones especially,---and yet more particularly his passionate lamentation, over Saul and Jonathan; 2 Sam. i. 17. &c.---(altho' he had been so unjustly and cruelly persecuted by the former,---and their deaths made way for him to the crown,---which was at that time brought to him;) and also over Abner and Amasa, when treacherously slain by Joab. All these, I say, may justly be brought in proof of the prevailing mildness of David's general disposition, and of his natural gentleness of temper. As may his tenderness even to the last for Absalom, his so undutiful and rebellious son,---as witnessed by his charge before, and his behaviour after he was slain by the same Joab, so expressly against his order,---“Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom:” and, “Would to God that I had died for thee, my son:” 2 Sam. xviii. 5. 33.---His putting no man to death after the suppression of that so extensive a rebellion; or even after a ten years civil war with Mephibosheth, the son of Saul; except the murderers of his rival only. “And let thine hand, O Lord my God, (saith he in a like spirit of meekness, and patriotism, 2 Sam. xxiv. 17.---1 Chro. xxi. 17) be against me, and again my father's house---but not on thy people.---For these sheep, what have they done †?” See appendix, No. 5.

* See appendix, No. 4.

† And this is no way inconsistent with his having been a man of war, and having shed much blood in it, 1 Chro. xxii. 8.---xxviii. 3.---According to that of our discerning poet,

“In war did never lion rage more fierce;

“In peace was never gentle lamb more mild.”

Shakespeare,

And

And, if it should be yet objected, that there is no just argument from general characters against such facts with which men may be charged on evidence. And that, if in particular we reason thus from David's general temper and disposition only, we may as well argue against the probability of his having been guilty as to the matter of Uriah, tho' he himself confessed it so plainly, 2 Sam. xii. 13.---We answer, that this must be allowed to be so far true, that this sort of argument can reach no farther than to a probability: tho' to a very fair one, (we presume) where there is not much more to counterpoise it, than in the present case appears.

I pass on therefore to observe, that I have of late had the pleasure to see I have not been alone in thinking, that the horrid imprecations with which this 109th Psalm seems repleat, are rather introduced by David, as a sample of such as had been uttered against him by his enemies, (by Shimei, or others) than such as he denounces against them. "For these curses, &c. are not against many, but against one person only.---" Set thou an ungodly person to be ruler over *him*,"---not *them*, &c. (i. e. perhaps, let his wicked son prevail against him, and reign over him; thus, "The Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hands of thy son," said Shimei.) "And besides, both in the beginning and end of this Psalm,---David complains of the dreadful things spoken against him by others,---" The mouth of the ungodly, (says he, ver. 1. 2.) the mouth of the deceitful is opened *upon me*.---They have spoken *against me* with false tongues; they have compassed *me* about with words of hatred."---And, after reciting the words of his enemies, (as we suppose) he adds in the words of my text,---"Tho' *they* curse, yet bless thou: and not, tho' *I* curse, yet bless thou; which would have been absurd and contradictory, for

" When

“ When one prayeth, and another curseth, whose voice shall the Lord hear ?” Ecc. xxxiv. 24. And when the same both prayeth and curseth, how shall he be heard at all ? “ And, if it be still objected, that David yet seems to make these curses his own by saying at ver. 19—“ Let it thus happen from the Lord unto mine enemies.”—There is here again no word expressive of a wish in the Hebrew *. I add,—and tho’ in the translation of my text ’tis said, “ and let them be confounded that rise up against me.” The same too is as true of this. It is in the original, “ they shall be confounded,” (*jebushu*) the same word as is mentioned before in Psm. xxxv. and both may be spoken, as hath been there shewn, but in his usual way of prophecy, and not of imprecation : Thus it shall, or will happen to them, unless they repent —“ Thus (says he, elsewhere) have they digged a pit before me, and shall fall into the midst of it themselves.” Psm. lvii. 7 †. For, (to consider this yet more minutely)—“ For the love that I had unto them, (says he at ver. 3.) lo ! they take now my contrary part : but I give myself unto prayer.”—Now if these, which there follow, and which we have seen above, were David’s prayers for his friends, or enemies, defend us from his curses !—unless all blessing and cursing signify just the same, as one word in the Hebrew language has been said to,—and which seems to have left it doubtful, whether Job’s wife advised him to curse God, or, in an ironical way to bless him ; in either case the sense is much the same. But, “ *thus* have they rewarded me, (continues he, ver. 4.) evil for good, and hatred for

* See Dr. Kennicott’s 2d dissertation on the Hebrew text, page 581, from Dr. Sykes.

† Appendix, No. 6,

my good will :”—“ Set thou an ungodly man to rule over him ;” and all that follows.—Now, how can we understand this more easily, or scarcely otherwise, than by—namely whilst *thus they* say, —“ Set thou an ungodly man to rule over him? &c.” which words immediately ensue from ver. 5. to 15. inclusive,—And when we may observe moreover, that this is no uncommon topick, or way of speaking with this sacred writer. For thus, Psm. xlii. 12. 13.—“ My bones, (says he) are smitten asunder as with a sword, whilst mine enemies that trouble me cast me in the teeth; namely, whilst they daily say unto me, ‘ where is now thy God !’ Here we find the words, “ namely, whilst they say unto me,” or the single one (*bamarim*) which like our word—saying---expresses it in the Hebrew, actually inserted, of which there seems to be an omission between the words of Plm. cix above : as also in the following, viz. in Plm. xli. 5.—7. where it is not less apparent : “ Mine enemies speak evil of me ;—‘ when shall he die,---and his name perish ?’---All mine enemies whisper together against me, even against me do they imagine this evil :—“ Let the sentence of guiltiness proceed against him, and now that he lieth, let him rise up no more.” Words very similar to those of Psm. cix. 6. “ When sentence is given upon him, let him be condemned *.” Tho’ this Psalm therefore is allowed to be David’s, as the title of it imports,---

* The Psalms being the very spirit of poetry, are more adapted to the ellipsis, than prose.---One of the same kind occurs, Psm. xxx. 8. 9. And it is observed by a great critick of our own, (Mr. Addison) that most of the modern heroic poets have imitated the ancients, in beginning a speech without premising that the person said thus, or thus :---but that it requires judgment to do it in such a manner, as that the speech shall begin naturally without it. See the Spectator, No. 321. Vol. IV. ad fin.

yet we may, perhaps, have scarce more cause to think, that the curses which he there recites, are such as he would have wished to have befallen his enemies,——than when he tells us in two other Psalms, “ The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God,”—he should be thought to have said so with him.

It is not however to be dissembled, that the commentators, as well old as new, have almost to a man, interpreted the imprecations in this Psalm as to be applied prophetically to the traitor Judas, supporting themselves upon the supposed authority of Acts, i. 16. 20. * where we read that, “ In those days St. Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said unto them,—“ Men and brethren; this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, who was guide to those who took Jesus.”——To which, perhaps, it may be sufficient to reply, that the words here cited may as well be understood (both in the original, and our translation) to mean, “ this scripture must needs have been fulfilled concerning Judas, or in his case,—which the Holy Ghost spake before, (or, heretofore) without asserting it to have been spoken before, in the sense of prophetically (as may sound on the first hearing) of, or concerning him;—and by the words this scripture,—the apostle explains himself at ver. 20. to mean, not this whole Psalm, but the few words of it only which he there quotes from ver. 8. together with some others from Psm. lxix. “ And his bishoprick, or office, let another take.”——And it is known to all, who are any way skilled in those matters, that there are many parts of the Old Testament, which

* See appendix, No. 7.

are referred to by the writers of the New, but by way of accommodation, or allusion only; i. e. by applying upon some occasions, and to some persons, such things as were originally written of, or spoken upon, others *.

And how easy it was, even for those of old times, (either wilfully, or otherwise,) to misinterpret scripture meanings;—and that such errors are the worse for being of long standing, we have a case in point, Matt. v. 43. where, to the words of Lev. xix. 18. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” the Jewish interpreters, even from old times, had boldly added, “and hate thine enemy;” and which our Lord therefore rejected, as I have before observed.

And when the same divine interpreter had afterwards approved the answer of the lawyer, Luke x. 27.—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, &c. and thy neighbour as thyself †:” and he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus,—“And who is my neighbour?” Our Lord, instead of a direct answer to him,—repeated his admirable parable of the good Samaritan; who, tho’ the Jews despised, and had no dealings with his nation (Joh. iv. 9.) yet kindly and generously relieved one of them, who had fallen among thieves, &c. by which he taught him,—and us thro’ him,—when he bade him go, and do likewise, that our

* This part was kindly corrected by Dr. Kennicott,—the author having before followed some commentators in the notion of a double prophecy. See his sermon on Isai. vii. 13. &c. and notes.

† The words which St. Matthew, xxii. 37. gives us as from our Lord himself,—are here recited by St. Luke, x. 27, as spoken by the lawyer in reply to him: But this is sufficiently cleared by Mark, xii. 30. 31. where we are told that each of them recited, and approved them, as the first and great commandment of the law.

Charitable assistance is not to be confined to our own nation, sect, or party;—that in cases of extreme distress,—tho' the person labouring under it, be a perfect stranger to us,—tho' most unworthy,—tho' the greatest enemy we have;—yet the consideration of humanity, and of God's command,—ought for the present, to silence all personal objections against him. Then that divine precept certainly takes place—"If thine enemy hunger,—feed him; if he thirst,—give him drink: so (saith St. Paul, Rom. xii. 20. from Solomon, Prov. xxv. 22.) shalt thou heap coals of fire upon his head;" i. e. we may be sure,—not with design to burn it,—(tho' it may, in the event, have that effect, if he will not relent, nor suffer his evil to be overcome with our good) but to melt down his affections, and soften the hardness of his heart towards us. "For I say unto you,—love your enemies; bless them that curse you; and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you," saith our blessed Lord, Matt. v. 44. "And lo then, a greater than Solomon is here!" Matt. xii. 42. I shall only add by way of close,—(*from the ingenious publication of a friend*) "That one single action like that of the good Samaritan,—tends more to the enjoyment of happiness, even in this life,—than the gratification of a malicious passion ten thousand times repeated *." And that David, having been restrained from killing Nabal, and his family, which in a sudden heat of passion he had resolved on, and set out to execute, (and which hasty resolve of this man after God's own heart, may not be unlikely to be objected against part of his foregoing character)

* See a sermon on charity by F. W.—the late Rev. Mr. Francis Welman, of Oaksey, Wilts: preached at Beaumaris, in Anglesey, 1750. Page 16.

appears to have received much greater pleasure, than he would have been likely to have found in his destruction, tho' he had been so outrageously affronted by *that brutish churl*.—" And David said to Abigail, (who had appeased him by her prudent interposition) " blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy advice,—and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

1 Sam. xxv. 32. 33. " In a word, (says the author of the historical account of the life of David, vol. I. p. 221.) the resolution against Nabal, was the resolution of a mortal, not to slay a military man, too much injured, and provoked.—The change, and the thanksgiving upon being averted from evil, were the sentiments of a hero, and a saint."—— I add,—and of one who was likely to have said, " tho' they curse, yet bless thou; and thy servant shall rejoice."——" Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever: Amen." Rev. v. 13.

A P P E N D I X ;

viz. NOTES, EXTRACTS, &c.

The following is a miscellaneous Collection from divers Authors, who have occasinoally touched upon the foregoing subject : and may be read as notes on it, as there referred to,—or as a continued piece, by way of supplement to it

No. I.

“ **I**T is certain that the Hebrews have no such thing in their language as an obtative mood. And therefore we cannot, from the bare formation of the verb, conclude the desire or wish of him that speaks.—For the truth of this, I appeal to those who are best skilled in that language.—2dly, They have however a way by which they express their wish, or desire, that a thing should come to pass. This the Psalmist does by two words (*mi itten*, who shall give, or, oh ! that any one would give) which expresses the desire of the speaker. Thus—“ Oh ! that the salvation of Israel were come out of Sion.” Psm. liii. 7.—or, “ who shall give it out of Sion ?” Psm. xiv. 11. and, “ Oh that I had wings like a dove,” lv. 6. &c. After this manner does the Psalmist express his wish, or desire.—But he no where uses this expression where he is supposed to pray against his enemies *.” —“ There is not in any one of these places any expression that imports any wish, or desire †.”

* See Bp. Kidder's Serm. 8vo. 1697, on Matt. v. 43. 44. p. 347.

† Ibid, p. 348.

No. 2.

A Note from Dr. Randolph's sermon on Jephtha's vow, page 35.

“THE 55th Psalm is a clear prophecy of the untimely fate of Ahitophel. The 16th verse runs in the Hebrew, and should be interpreted, thus,—‘Death shall seize upon them: they shall go down into the grave alive;’ i. e. in their full strength and vigour.—But the Septuagint has rendered it *αὐθις*, &c.—and our English translation has made it much worse,—‘Let death come hastily upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.’ Where there are two capital faults,—a most horrid curse given us instead of a prophecy,—and the word which in the Hebrew signifies the grave, or state of the dead, rendered hell. Nor has our new translation corrected either of these faults; only it has put the grave in the margin.

“Thus also the 109th Psalm, as it stands in our translation, has given great and just offence to many good Christians. But the difficulty may be removed by only rendering the verbs in the future tense, as they are literally in the Hebrew; and then the sense will be plain and easy. It contains a prophecy, first—of the fate of Doeg; secondarily, of that of the Traytor Judas. And to this last St. Peter has applied Acts i. 20.—*The whole of the matter is*,—that there is no optative mood in the Hebrew language, but the future tense is used instead of it: and therefore verbs in the future may thus be construed, when the sense requires, or will admit of it.”

No. 3.

Extract from Delany's Historical Account of the Life of David, Vol. III. page 338, 340.

“BUT, as I have nothing in view but the manifestation of truth, I will not dissemble, that David's character, as a generous enemy, hath been greatly impeached by his last dying charge to Solomon, in relation to Joab, and Shimei; on both whom he desires vengeance should be taken for those crimes which he seemed to have forgiven in the one, by suffering them to go so long unpunished, and which he expressly forgave in the other,

other, and confirmed that forgiveness by an oath, that he should not die.

“ To the first of these I answer, that Joab’s murders were crimes which David never did forgive, and very probably thought he could not, in contradiction of the express commands of God : and therefore that guilt he himself wanted only power to punish. ‘ And I, (says he) am this day weak, tho’ anointed king, and the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me: But—the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.’ 2 Sam. iii. 39.

“ As to the other,---the obligation of his oath was purely personal. ‘ And I sware unto him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death.’ 1 Kin. ii. 8.—And therefore, altho’ David was bound, Solomon was at full liberty to vindicate the majesty of kings in chastising this high insult on his father: and therefore when he had acted up to the piety and dignity of his own character, he very wisely admonished his son to act up to the wisdom of his.” 2 Sam. xix. 21. 22. 23: we read,---“ But Abishai said,---shall not Shimei be put to death for this ---because he cursed the Lord’s anointed?---And David said, shall there any Man be put to death this day in Israel? &c. Therefore the king said unto Shimei, thou shalt not die: and the king sware unto him.” The sense seems to be, thou shalt not at this time be put to death, merely for this offence.

“ But thou art a wise man, (says he to Solomon, 1 Kings, ii. 9.) and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him.”—And how wisely he contrived to bring the offender’s blood on his own head,—and justly, even by his own confession, we read at large there, ver. 30. to the end.

And if it should be here objected against the general mildness of David’s temper, that, when he had taken Rabbah, the royal city of the children of Ammon, he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows, and made them pass thro’ the brick-kiln, 2 Sam. xii. 31.--“ And thus did he to all the cities of the children of Ammon.”---This will not (we hope) be understood to signify, that he put this whole people thus cruelly to death: But only that he reduced them to a state of servile drudgery, (as the Ægyptians had done by the Israelites of old) and made them work with the in-

instruments there mentioned; and as Joshua had long before reduced the people of Gibeon to be hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the congregation of the Lord,---because they had over-reached both it, and him, tho' they were fore afraid for their lives, &c. as we read Josh. ix.---and which was a much less provoking offence, than these had been guilty of to David, and his servants.---And it may be farther observed, that, when David was obliged by the command of God (intimated by a famine of three years continuance) to give up some of Saul's family to justice, for the murder of some of these Gibeonites, whom Saul sought to slay in his zeal for Israel, and Judah, 2 Sam. xxi. he spared Mephibosheth, Micha his son, and their families,---the male descendants of Saul and Jonathan, his eldest son, who alone could have any pretence to dispute the crown with him;---one of whose offspring, Ulam, had many sons, and sons sons, an hundred and fifty, who were afterwards mighty men of valour, archers, &c. as we read 1 Chr. viii. 34. and gave up only Saul's bastard children, and those of his daughter by Adriel,---who had no right, or pretence to the throne, whilst any of all these were living. And thus he sheweth his inviolable regard to his oaths,---his tenderness to Saul,---and the warmth of his gratitude and friendship to Jonathan. (See Dr. Chandler's review of the history of the man after God's own heart, p. 217. 292.)

No. 4.

“AND here (says the fore-cited writer) we have in few words a clear comment upon all the curses throughout David's Psalms. They are all prophetick denunciations of divine vengeance. David cursed because God commanded him; and how could he tell but Shimei had the same commission to curse him, altho', perhaps, in his rage he exceeded it? He knew himself innocent of the blood of Saul now charged upon him; but, at the same time he knew himself guilty of the blood of Uriah: and who knew, whether this was not part of the vengeance due to it *?” “And,—I

* See Dr. Delany's life of David, vol. III. page 137.

choose (says another learned author) to rest the thing entirely upon the divine warrant (either by private impulse of the spirit, or outward direction) as appearing the easiest, and shortest rule, and which will hold universally; which perhaps the other interpretations will not. For there are several imprecations in scripture, which seem not fairly reduceable to the head of prophecies †." And it has been observed more lately by a writer of great merit, that the verbs of the imperative mood (*γινώσκω* and *ἵτω*) in the former part of St. Peter's quotation, Acts i. 20. which is taken from Psm. lxi, and *λαλοῖ* of the latter, in the optative, are very unfavourable to the opinion of those who render these imprecations in the future sense: and that it is hoped the sense it aims at removing may be sufficiently obviated by considering, that, when a being of infinite wisdom, and mercy, wills the infliction of any punishment, as absolutely necessary to the vindication of his honour,—it is our duty to will it also; as when we pray that the will of God may be done in earth, as it is in heaven: and that he sees therefore no inconvenience in supposing an inspired writer, at the same time that he foretells the punishment, which God has absolutely determined to inflict on any particular person,—to have been directed to express his own desire (a desire which it was his duty to entertain) that the measures which God sees necessary to the support of his laws, may be accomplished *.

Now,—tho' we may perhaps agree with him, where, and so far as, this will of God, and desire of his prophets, are certainly expressed;—yet here,—whether, and how far, these are at all expressed, are the very matters in dispute.—Or,—to borrow the better words of the ingenious author of the address to the rational advocates of the church of England on this subject, by Tyro Phileleutherus †, 1768,—“If any man can have a full persuasion, that the all wise God has decreed the absolute reprobation of particular persons, their entire rejection from mercy, and eternal misery, consequent

† See Scripture vindicated, part 3d, p. 24.

* See the late Mr. Merrick's annotations on the Psalms, page 222. 223.

† Since acknowledged by the Rev. Dr Duncan, rector of South Warnborough, Hants. See an advertisement at the end of his visitation serm. on Matt. v. 20. at Basingstoke, 1769.
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upon it,—he may; he must, in that case, acknowledge their condemnation to be just.—But how it can enter into the mind of man to conceive the least propriety in making this the subject of a petition to God,—is, I own, past my comprehension, &c.” (page 58, note.)—This learned writer seems likewise to think, that the objection from the imperative and optative Greek verbs above,—may be sufficiently answered, by supposing the apostle to have quoted them as he found them in the Septuagint translation. Page 67. note.

No. 5.

IF it should be here asked,——“If; (according to 1 Kings xv. v.) David did that which was right in the fight of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite:”—how we shall reconcile this with what we read 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. that David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the people,——“And David said unto the Lord I have sinned greatly in that I have done?” It may be answered, that he appears not herein to have turned aside from any express command of God;—nor is it here distinctly said wherein he sinned so greatly in this matter; whether it was (as some of the commentators tell us) that he neglected to pay the half shekel a head which is ordered on such numberings, Exod. xxx. 12. 15—or, which may seem more likely, that the greatness of their numbers may have lifted up his heart from God, and tempted him to trust in some fort, in their arm of flesh;—allowing however this sin to have been great, from the greatness of the punishment inflicted on him by God for it; we are told yet at ver. 1st, “That the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David to number them, &c.”—In the times of peace, plenty, and indulgence, preceding this period, they seem to have been guilty of some national offence, which moved the Lord against them: And in the parallel passage, 1 Chro. xxi. 1. that “Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number them.” It appears then from both these passages together, that Satan did this by God’s permission; as God, according to James i. 13. tempteth no man,—i. e. so as to entice him into sin, tho’ he often

often tries, or proves his servants, i. e. not so if he knew not how they would behave,---but places them in such circumstances, in which they may prove, or evidence their virtues to themselves, or others:—This sin then of David (whatsoever it was) was not so much his own, as it arose thus, in part, from foreign suggestion,—as was that other, in which he was so tempted, as to be drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Ibid ver. 12.

It is said by our great Dr. Clarke,—(Vol. VII. Serm. 9. p. 208. Ed. 8vo.) that,—“ David---the man after God’s own heart, was indeed guilty of some actions which are very far from being justifiable: but then those actions are expressly excepted, as being not parts, but blots in that character.”—As he does not mention any particulars,—we need but to observe, that this appears to be directly contrary to what is asserted of him by the sacred writer 1 Kings xv. 5. But on which see Dr. Porteus’s note in the last page of this.

No. 6.

“ THE reader, (says Dr. Kennicott *,) is indebted for the following remark to the late Dr. Sykes; who has given it in the preface to his comment on the epistle to the Hebrews.”—And Mr. Merrick, in answer to a question from Dr. Lowth,---whether he had considered Dr. K.’s quotation from Dr. S. *that the curses, ver. 6.---19. are those of David’s enemies upon him?* tells us, “ he shall make no other apology to his learned and ingenious friend for the freedom with which he examines his criticisms, than what their common design (that of illustrating and defending the sacred text) suggests.”—And, after acquainting us that Dr. K. has, since the publication of his learned work, favoured him with a translation of this whole Psalm, (which he has inserted in his appendix, No. 4. p. 306.) in which the 20th verse is rendered thus,---“ This behaviour of mine enemies is from the Lord;” in support of which he quotes 2 Sam. xvi. 10. 11.---urges two reasons only of his dissent from this interpretation, viz. 1st, that there is some difficulty in supposing the inspired author of the Psalm to have distinctly repeated the impious speeches of his enemies

* See his 2d dissertation on the Hebrew text, p. 581, note.
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thro' almost half the extent of so long a composition : and 2dly, that it yet seems more difficult to imagine, that any part of such impious speeches should be quoted by an apostle as a prophetic portion of scripture †."---But may not the learned author have objected the first difficulty to supposing the inspired writer of Deut. xxvii. xxviii. to have filled more than one half of so long a composition with curses, as he there has done?---The latter is, it is presumed, fully answered in the foregoing, p. 15. 16. & p. seq. If not,---we may even venture to leave them both in their full strength, with a--"valeat quantum quæque valere potest."---Tho', the same thought with that of Dr. Sykes having occurred to the writer of this, long before he knew it had been remarked by him, or any other, he was at first induced to distrust it by being referred to Acts. i. 16. 20.

But how easily a facetious writer steps over the whole of the foregoing, may appear from the following extract from the history of the man after God's own heart, p. 97. 98. "When the vindictive tenor of any of David's Psalms has been insisted on, the translation is immediately censured, prudently enough, (says he) as every one, who has the sense to perceive the incongruity between such bloody wishes and denunciations, and the acknowledged purity and mercy of the beneficent father of nature, may not have learning enough to dispute about Hebrew points, and to make them point what meaning he pleases §." "However, such a one, by comparing the labours of Hebrew critics, may yet be enabled to form some judgment between them.—For instance, in that terrible 109th Psalm,—it is certain our Doctors in Divinity do not like it. Some therefore say, "That the verbs are not translated in their proper tenses, and that prophetick declarations are thus mistaken for the Psalmist's execrations." Others again say, "That to be sure they are imprecations,—but not the imprecations of David, but those of his enemies on him, which he there only relates." "O happy men! (says he) why do we not all

† See his annotations on this Psalm, p. 221. 222.

§ But, as the Hebrew points are here no point in question,--to what is the poignancy of this sentence pointed?

learn Hebrew!"—Ay, why do we not indeed, say I? so many of us however as have leisure, and are so strangely inclined to entertain the world on subjects which necessarily require a competent knowledge of it!—

"THIS IS NOT PRENTICES WORK:" says (I think) the learned and serious Dr. Chandler,

No. 7.

IT cannot be denied however, that the commentators, &c. have (as I have said) almost to a man, interpreted the imprecations in this Psalm as to be applied prophetically to the traitor Judas; supporting themselves on the supposed authority of Acts i. 16. 20. inasmuch, that I know of but one (Le Clerc) who has ventured to gainsay it, and he has been reproached for it by others of good name.—“This Psalm cix. is undoubtedly David’s, as the title of it imports, and it was penned by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. To both which St. Peter gives his testimony, Acts i. 16.—Le Clerc, in his comment on this Psalm, would persuade us, that the words carry no prophecy in them: which is directly contrary to St. Peter’s words. And as this is not the first time that learned critick has been bolder than becomes him, and has suggested the same thing;—so I may observe that he has been abundantly corrected for it by able hands, referred to in the margin. This Psalm therefore, as I before hinted, is prophetic of the treachery of Judas, and declarative of the divine vengeance that should fall upon his head†.” “It contains a prophecy, 1st, of the fate of Doeg; 2dly, of that of the traitor Judas: and to this last St. Peter has applied it, Acts i. 20*.” And some of the church of Rome have even gone so far, as to leave David and his enemies quite out of the intention of this Psalm, and to apply the curses it contains solely to that traitor, and the unbelieving Jews. For which there is no better reason given by the great cardinal Bellarmine,—than “that there is no mention of David and his persecutors in the title of the Psalm, (as if there was a mention of

† See scripture vindicated, part 3. p. 22.

* Dr. Randolph’s note, retro, p. 20

Judas, and the others there) and that many of the fathers, &c. of great name, whom he cites on the occasion, have interpreted it so before him †." And some have seemed to think it worthy of remarking, that there are just thirty curses contained in this whole psalm;—being exactly equal to the number of pieces of money for which that son of perdition sold our Lord: and which they are therefore very scrupulous in numbering;—as also in seeking out the first who had the glory to make this shrewd remark *.

But what one of all these thirty curses do we find denounced against this wretch by the meek Saviour of mankind himself, when he was actually betrayed by him? who, as we read, Matt. xxvii. 50. 51.—then only said unto him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?—But suffer ye thus far, and he touched the servant's ear which Peter had cut off, and healed it: And the worst that he appears ever to have said of him, is at ver. 24. "It had been good for him, if he had not been born!"

† See Explanatio in Psalms, Bellarmino Cardinali Lugduni, 1612, p. 821. in Tit. & Arg. Psm. 108. on which it may be noted that, the vulgate translation having annexed the tenth Psalm to the ninth, so as to make but one of both, is the occasion that those who follow it count one short of others (and thus, Psm. 109, is with them 108) to Psm. 147. which that translation divides into two, and so makes the whole number of the Psalms 150, as with us.

* "————— Petrus Damiani, scribens Cadaloo anti-papæ, affirmat contineri in hoc Psalmo triginta maledictiones adversus Judam, pro numero denariorum quibus vendidit Christum.—Hoc ipsum tradidit Rupertus. Beda, explanans acta apostolorum, prior adhuc idem docuit, sed et a quodam auctore græco, quem non nominat, idem adnotatum admonet Agellius."—Vide Lorinum, é soc. jes. in Psalms, vol. 3. fol. p. 293.

P O S T S C R I P T.

BUT it may yet be asked,—“ Whether the description following the repetition of the curses, ver. 16. to 20. can be applied to David, viz. that he remembered not to shew mercy, that he persecuted the poor needy man, that he loved cursing, and cloathed himself with it, as with a garment ?”——We answer,—certainly not justly ; or what have we been proving ?—tho’ even this is agreeable to a part of Shimei’s accusation of him,—“ because thou art a bloody man, &c.”—and he had before complained that the wicked had spoken against him with a lying tongue, as well as fought against him without a cause.—But I rather take this part of the Psalm to be a return to the description of his enemies, which had been intermitted from ver. 4. (the repetition of their curses being inserted between as in a parenthesis) “ Thus have they rewarded me evil for good, &c.” ver. 4. and that because his mind was not to do good, &c. ver. 15.—And it has been suggested to me, that the change of persons, from the plural to the singular,—which may be here objected, may possibly be thus accounted for, viz. that David thus far speaking of his enemies collectively, suddenly reflects on some principal one of them, (as on Shimei, or Doeg) and thenceforth proceeds in the singular number.—Thus also Psm. xli. 5. 6.—“ *Mine enemies* speak evil of me, &c.” and “ if *he* come to see me, he speaketh vanity.” The commentators seem rightly to explain,—“ If he, i. e. if any one of them, come to see me, &c.”——And thus too the English verse translation by Tate and Brady has expressed this change of persons at ver. 6. viz. “ Their guilty leader shall be made to some ill man a slave.”—I add,—that as we read 2 Sam. xix. 17. that Shimei came to meet David on his return in peace with a thousand men of Benjamin with him ;—it is not likely that he was wholly unaccompanied

nied at the time he signalized himself by cursing him so bitterly : and persecuted the poor helpless man, to slay him that was vexed at the heart, as at ver. 15. which words seem very descriptive of David's most disconsolate condition, when Shimei thus cursed him at Bahurim ; besides that he seems to say expressly at ver. 22. " I am that poor helpless man."

It may be thought of less consequence, perhaps, to note, that the latter parts of each verse which contain the imprecations in this Psalm, seem, for the most part, but responses to the parts foregoing, or an assent to them severally, with some aggravation ; and being connected to them by the conjunctive, or disjunctive particles, *and* or *nor*, (thus—" Let his days be few ; *and* another take his office : Let his children be fatherless ; *and* his wife a widow : Let there be no man to pity him ; *nor* to have compassion upon his fatherless children.") may lead us to suppose, they may have been recited by Shimei and his companions as by a precentor and his choir ; and in Dr. Grabe's edition of the septuagint translation of this psalm,---it is thus divided into hemisticks, or half verses, as if designed to be pointed to be sung, or said, as in our churches the whole ones are read by the minister and congregations in our daily service.

" Alternis dicetis ; amant alterna camænæ :"

says the great Roman poet. And we know this was not at all unusual with the Jews :---as when Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord, and Miriam and all the women went out after her, and answered them, as we read in Exod. xvi. 20. 21.---and as the women answered one another as they played, and said, " Saul has slain his thousands ;---and David his ten thousands." 1 Sam. xviii. 7. and as the blessings and cursings were particularly ordered by God to be pronounced alternately with great solemnity by the several tribes of Israel assembled for that purpose on the opposite mountains of Ebal, and Gerizim. Deut. xxvii. passim.

The plain fact as to the translations of the supposed imprecations in the book of Psalms,---seems to have been scarce more than this, viz. that some of the first interpreters having taken the harsher sense of those parts
of

of scripture.---which (as is before shewn) are fairly as capable of a milder, the rest have followed them therein, till length of time has given a kind of sanction to it.---

But, that almost all the verbs in the imprecatory Psalms, (as they have been called) appear to have been mistranslated, viz. that they are expressed in the Hebrew in the future tense, and that this future does not necessarily require an imperative or optative sense,---has been fully and distinctly proved in a late ingenious publication entitled an Address to the rational Advocates of the Church of England, and all who read the holy scriptures in the original language: the learned author of which has chosen to conceal himself under the name of Tyro Phileleutherus. Doddsley, 1769 *.

The life and character of David have been of late days fully explained, and sifted as wheat, (Luke xxii. 31.) by Messrs. Bayle, Morgan, &c. and more especially by the History of the Man after God's own heart, on the one side: and by Drs. Delany, Chandler, Patten, Mr. Francis, &c. in their several publications on the other. And the subject of the imprecations in his Psalms (besides what is said of them by all the commentators) having been pretty fully handled by Dr. Jenkin in his reasonableness of the Christian Rel. vol. 2, p. 240. &c. by Dr. Stanhope on the epistles and gospels, vol. 2. p. 160, &c. and in Mr. Lowth's answer to five letters on inspiration, p. 216.---228. and table of contents, p. 5: To these we need, perhaps, add only Bp. Kidder's serm. on Mat. v. 43. 47. and Dr. Porteus's ingenious discourse, at Cambridge, on 1 Sam. xiii. 14. Nov. 22, 1761, (*which distinguishes between his regal and private character,*) to compleat our reading on these subjects.

* This is since acknowledged by the Rev. Dr. Duncan, rector of South Warmborough, Hants. See his visitation sermon, on Matt. v. 20. Carnan and Co. 1769.

The following notes are extracted from the discourse last mentioned, p. 4. 5. and 6. (viz.)

“ See Divine Legation of Moses—V. iii. B. 4. S. 6. P. 354. 3d edit.—Where the late historian of *David* might have found many of those difficulties which he says are beyond the power of *lay-skill* to reconcile, cleared up by the hand of a master.”

“ It is observed (*Hist. of the Man after God's own heart*, p. 52.) that *David's* moral character seems to be pronounced faultless, (*1 Kings* xv. 5.) except in the matter of *Uriah*.—We reply, that the scripture in this (as in many other places) must necessarily be understood to speak only in *general*; intimating that king *David's* conduct was in the *main* good and right, and though he might be guilty of other faults, yet none of them were so gross and enormous, so directly repugnant to the *express commands* of God as this; and therefore not so necessary to be pointed out, and particularly distinguished. Whoever is well acquainted with the scripture phraseology must allow that it not only admits but perpetually requires such restrictions as this—See *Matt.* v. 48. It must be further remarked; that the two parts of the verse in question (*1 Kings* v. 5.) are entirely distinct, and independent of each other. The first part giving us *David's* *regal*, and the other his *private* character. In his *regal*, *he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*; and even in his *private* conduct, (adds the sacred historian) *he turned not aside* (in any notorious degree) from what *God commanded him*, except in the matter of *Uriah*. No argument therefore can be founded on the exception in the latter part of the verse against the interpretation above given of the former part, nor consequently against the uses made of that interpretation.”

F I N I S.

Errata:---P. 9. note, lin. ult. after the word *esto*, add *to bless, and curse not*, *Rom.* xii. 14.---P. 11. line 22. after *2 Sam.* v. 33. insert the words *As also*

